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ENGAGEMENT THROUGH DEPLOYMENT:  
SHAPING AMERICA'S FUTURE MILITARY

BY

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Engagement Through Deployment: Shaping America's  
Future Military

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### **ENGAGEMENT THROUGH DEPLOYMENT: SHAPING AMERICA'S FUTURE MILITARY**

#### **AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Arthur H. Barber III, CAPT, USN  
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The Defense Department Bottom-Up Review in October 1993 established the ability to fight two near-simultaneous "major regional conflicts" as the primary basis for U.S. military force structure planning. Current force reductions are reshaping the military both to meet this mission and to meet very stringent budget limits. It is becoming clear that these budget limits are too small to support a future force large enough to fight two wars, yet still modern and ready enough to win them. Without a compelling global threat, the spending is unlikely to increase. America's military is faced with a mismatch between its plans and its resources.

The nation's strategy of engagement rests on two co-equal military pillars: the capability to conduct diverse global operations other than war, and the capability to deploy to a major regional war and win it. The military of the future must maintain a balance in both capabilities, while still sustaining modernization. The U.S. has not faced more than one major war at a time in fifty years, but over this same period its national interests and influence have depended on a robust capability to conduct global OOTW. Future U.S. military operations are likely to follow this same broad pattern. Today's military force structure, built primarily for warfighting, is being used heavily every day for OOTW. Such operations are the daily price of maintaining U.S. engagement and influence.

The nation's military should be shaped within its limited funds to provide the capability for effective joint operations both in global OOTW and in a single regional war. Reductions should be focused on the forces supporting the lower-priority capability for a second major war. Based on their inherent characteristics and on current experience, Army active-duty support forces, certain Air Force aircraft units, and many types of Navy, Marine, and SOF forces, provide the capabilities the U.S. needs and deploys most frequently to conduct OOTW. These forces must remain large enough in America's future military to sustain this critical type of support.

## INTRODUCTION

The collapse of Soviet-led Communism changed the simple rules by which U.S. security was planned during the Cold War. While the debate over the new rules proceeds, U.S. forces are moving out of overseas bases and are demobilizing. The remaining forces are conducting temporary overseas deployments more frequently and to more places than ever before, mostly for what is now called "operations other than war" (OOTW). These are the day-to-day military operations of regional deterrence, stability, and humanitarian assistance that have long been critical to U.S. global access and influence. They will continue to be critical to the nation's engagement in world affairs.

The Defense Department Bottom-Up Review recently established the ability to fight two near-simultaneous "major regional conflicts" as the primary basis for U.S. military force structure planning. Current force reductions are reshaping the military both to meet this mission and to meet very stringent budget limits. It is becoming clear that these budget limits are too small to support a future force large enough to fight two wars, yet still modern and ready enough to win them. Without a compelling global threat, the spending is unlikely to increase. America's military is faced with a mismatch between its plans and its resources.

The U.S. has not faced more than one major war at a time in fifty years, but over this same period its national interests and influence have depended on a robust capability to conduct global OOTW. Future U.S. military operations are likely to follow this

same broad pattern. The nation's military should be shaped within its limited funds to provide the capability for effective joint operations both in global OOTW and in a single regional war. This paper will characterize the nature of future joint operations and will describe the capabilities and shape of the military best-suited to conduct them.

#### THE NATURE OF FUTURE MILITARY OPERATIONS

America's emerging national security strategy recognizes that the world's single superpower must remain involved in world affairs, and it commits the nation to such involvement.

"America must pursue political, economic, and military engagement internationally. Such an approach helps to avoid the risk of global instability and imbalance.... It also helps shape the international environment in ways needed to protect and advance U.S. objectives over the longer term."<sup>1</sup>

During the Cold War, the United States built a global security system of alliances, bases, and forces to contain Communism. The scope and durability of this system of voluntarily-allied sovereign states, and the accompanying pattern of U.S. base access and force deployments overseas, was unprecedented in history.<sup>2</sup> This historic luxury gave the nation great flexibility in its global use of the military instrument of national power, and the U.S. leadership

reached for this instrument frequently. Few of the events where U.S. forces were committed involved direct Communist challenges; most were actions of engagement rather than containment. Only three of these events--Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Storm--were large-scale wars. Most were what today's joint doctrine calls "operations other than war":

"Military operations other than war ... range from peacetime operations such as providing assistance to civil authorities, to contingencies such as a show of force, to combat operations associated with short-duration interventions, to post-combat restoration operations."<sup>3</sup>

The capability to fight and win a major regional conflict is one of the two pillars of conventional military credibility on which the U.S. strategy of engagement must rest. There is no justification in recent history, however, for placing a high priority on the capability to fight two such conflicts. When the U.S. was involved in each of the three regional wars it has fought since 1945, no second conflicts developed in other regions. Yet during two of these (Korea and Vietnam), the U.S. was facing a global threat with the potential to orchestrate such a challenge. During the third (Desert Storm), North Korea was ready for war but did not seize the opportunity.

The second pillar of credibility for future U.S. conventional military forces should not be readiness for a second war, but

rather readiness to engage in global operations other than war. Such operations are a vital military contribution to the economic and political elements of a superpower's national security. Budgetary limits will not allow the U.S. to preserve complete insurance for every possible future requirement. The military must choose between being partially effective at every requirement or fully effective at the most important and likely. Warfighting is the most comfortable mission for the nation's military, but preserving excessive warfighting capabilities at the expense of the capability to conduct OOTW would put this vital tool out of balance with national strategic requirements.

Current doctrine<sup>4</sup> lists the following specific missions as part of OOTW:

- Peacekeeping/peace enforcement
- Counterterrorism
- Humanitarian assistance
- Counter-drug operations
- Foreign internal defense
- Sanction enforcement
- Non-combatant evacuation operations
- Deterrence
- Raids and strikes

While such operations may look like wars to the participants, when viewed from a national perspective OOTW are ostensibly low-

risk or short-duration affairs where U.S. forces operate under tight rules for limited aims. These aims include: defense of economic order, preservation of U.S. political influence, support of international order, and unilateral actions supporting U.S. interests. These are the exact aims of America's strategy of engagement, and OOTW are the daily military means that execute this strategy.

#### Defense of Economic Order

Since 1945, America has pursued a policy of fostering global economic order and interdependence. It has succeeded, but as a result U.S. prosperity now depends on an international economy that is very vulnerable to many types of disruption: closure of an international trade route, restriction of market access to a vital raw material, or acts of piracy and terrorism. Such disruptions have occurred regularly around the globe over the last fifty years. Few were caused by the Communist threat, so there is no reason to believe that the decline of Communism will reduce future disruptions. Instead, the removal of bipolar bloc restraints has released long-suppressed violent tensions around the world. This security environment will require strong U.S. capability to conduct both multinational and unilateral military action to defend its economic interests. "Today's economic openness has been associated with a global American military presence."<sup>5</sup>

### Preservation of Political Influence

Because it can accompany diplomatic and economic actions with decisive military power wherever and whenever it chooses, America today has great political influence in shaping the course of international affairs. The presence of U.S. military forces is viewed by nearly all nations in those regions of U.S. vital interest as a welcome stabilizing factor. Without the umbrella of deployed American forces, other nations might seek to become major military powers, destabilizing their regions and perhaps rivalling the U.S. for global leadership. This nation's relative influence in the world would be weakened by abdication of its unique military role.

The presence of deployed U.S. forces in turbulent regions extends U.S. political influence by deterring those who might take actions unfavorable to U.S. interests. Deterrence is the form of OOTW that links these operations to war; where it fails, war results. It is most likely to fail when the military forces behind it are not credible or visible. This occurs when the group being deterred believes that these forces will not be used, cannot remain engaged, or cannot extract an intolerable price in combat. "For future U.S. conventional forces to deter, they must maintain some form of visibility in order to be perceived as credible and capable."<sup>6</sup> Temporary deployments rather than permanent basing are the future trend for U.S. forces in the vital national missions of

deterrance and preservation of influence.

#### Support of International Order

The number of sovereign political entities in the world appears to have no limit, but the number able to sustain themselves is harshly finite. As a result of this dichotomy, the United Nations will probably receive an increasing number of calls for humanitarian rescues or for peacekeeping in wars of survival. While the U.N. has shown the inclination to become more involved in such operations, it does not have an independent ability to execute them. Since 1945 the United States has often taken the leading role in actions supporting international order and human rights. These actions were nearly all OOTW, and most relied on the U.S. military's unmatched logistics, communications, and surveillance capabilities. U.N. operations to maintain international order will probably increase, and most will continue to involve some form of U.S. military support.

Today's trend away from permanent alliances toward ad-hoc coalitions for major military operations increases the importance of broad multinational cooperation in U.S. strategy. Whether for a regional war in defense of vital national interests, or for U.N. operations, future U.S. forces will often need to integrate quickly with forces of other nations. The U.S. can best prepare for future international operations by deploying routinely for multinational

exercises with other nations. Such exercises familiarize others with U.S. doctrine while familiarizing our forces with their capabilities and equipment.

#### Defense of National Interests

The nation's major warfighting forces will remain focused on the arc of vital national interests which extends from East Asia through the Persian Gulf to Western Europe. There are many points outside this arc, however, where America could have to use smaller military forces to protect national vulnerabilities. America's economic interests and its citizens continue to spread to new regions of emerging opportunity, where they are highly vulnerable targets for those seeking leverage to influence the superpower's policies. The military capability to conduct OOTW anywhere in the world will remain an important national insurance policy for U.S. citizens and interests abroad.

Where an operation involves strictly U.S. interests, the allies of the Cold War will not necessarily follow America's lead. When they do not, the U.S. bases or forces in these nations may well not be accessible. Even if allies support the operation it may occur in an area distant from them, or where the existing infrastructure is of limited use. Future U.S. military forces must maintain their capability to conduct OOTW with minimal dependence on overseas infrastructure.

## JOINT FORCE CAPABILITIES

Regardless of the nature of the operation in which they are used, U.S. military forces must be shaped and employed so that they can control the operation in four dimensions:

- Time: the ability to act more quickly and endure longer
- Reach: the ability to overcome the distance from their bases
- Military Capability: the ability to accomplish the mission and neutralize any resistance
- Political Agility: the ability to maintain superiority in use of local and international politics for military advantage

Each of these dimensions affects the type of future joint force that the U.S. should field. The shape of this future military will depend heavily on the balance between warfighting and OOTW capabilities. The force that is best-suited for OOTW is not necessarily the most effective or economic force for major warfighting. Both types of force are needed, but current planning gives too little attention to the force requirements for OOTW. As

the total force becomes smaller, these forces must be clearly identified and carefully preserved.

Dominating the dimension of time requires forces capable of a speedy response, or a sustained one, or both. Fast-breaking OOTW such as counterterrorist actions or assistance to endangered U.S. citizens require forces that can apply a decisive capability promptly. Even for those operations where coalition action is appropriate, an initial U.S. stabilizing response could be required until a coalition force can be formed and fielded. "A relatively small force that responds early in a crisis can sometimes accomplish much more than a larger force that responds later."<sup>7</sup> To achieve time dominance, the U.S. will need ready, air-deployable units as well as forces that are routinely deployed at sea near potential crisis scenes. The sea-based forces provide capabilities that are not air deployable, support air-deployed forces, and provide an alternative if air base access is denied.

Other forms of OOTW--peacekeeping, post-war stability operations, deterrence, and humanitarian relief--may require U.S. forces capable of remaining engaged indefinitely. When such a requirement develops in a place where U.S. forces are not permanently based, this endurance will require extended forward deployments. The active U.S. forces that are initially deployed must be backed up by a pool of other active units to serve as their rotation base. This pool must be large enough to provide the required endurance without an unbearable strain on people or equipment.

U.S. forces can only be effective militarily if they have the reach to apply the needed capability at the place and time it is required. As President Bush noted, "no amount of political change will alter the geographic fact that we are separated from many of our most important allies and interests by thousands of miles of water."<sup>8</sup> Reach depends on the location of the operation compared to the location of accessible supporting bases (afloat or ashore). American forces in an OOTW will often be operating at a great distance from their supporting land bases; the reach capability to offset this is expensive but essential. The future combat and logistic reach of U.S. forces must not become unduly constrained by dependence on access to foreign bases.

U.S. planning has placed great emphasis on ensuring that the nation's military forces have adequate capability for the specific missions of warfighting. The capabilities required for OOTW are more difficult to forecast, and the missions are more limited and political than in warfighting. Clearly, many OOTW requirements will continue to be met in the future as they have been in the past, by retasking capabilities developed and maintained for combat. As U.S. warfighting capabilities are rebalanced and reduced, however, those retained must include those unique to OOTW. The processes for selecting which new capabilities to field and which existing ones to retain must explicitly consider the unique missions and requirements of OOTW.

Military forces engage in most types of OOTW as much for political effect as they do to achieve a specific military

objective. The success of the U.S. in OOTW depends on having forces that are properly shaped and employed in both the political and the military dimensions. Future forces must be politically agile in two arenas of political operation: domestic and international.

The agility of U.S. forces in the domestic political arena depends on the public's perception of mission cost versus mission importance. Operations that are perceived to have the risk of high human or dollar cost receive intense scrutiny by the Congress and the media. They are unlikely to be sustainable unless the U.S. public sees vital national interests immediately at stake. Without public and Congressional support, mobilized reserve forces are unlikely to be available to help conduct an OOTW. The forces committed to many types of potentially-risky OOTW will require low visibility to media, low vulnerability to casualties, and low dependence on reserve-component support. This form of agility is best provided by active-duty forces at sea and in the air, rather than forces on the ground within reach of protagonists and media.

International political agility in an operation depends on two factors: the depth of U.S. commitment and the degree to which other nations participate. As the U.S. increases its visibility and investment of prestige in an operation, its agility to change policy becomes more limited. Operations that achieve U.S. objectives through multinational action offer more agility and less risk exposure than unilateral U.S. actions. International agility depends on having a full range of military capabilities available,

to permit choice of the one best-suited to complement other nations' contributions.

#### SHAPING THE JOINT FORCE

The Bottom-Up Review defined a large force structure requirement for the strategy of engagement. The U.S. defense budget has not provided enough funds to simultaneously support and modernize this force,<sup>9</sup> and this shortfall is increasing. This mismatch between strategy and resources will soon force further reductions in the size of America's military. The core capability of a modern force capable of multiple global OOTW and a single major short-warning conflict must be identified and retained in this process.

The bare minimum force structure requirements for a regional conflict were detailed in the Bottom-Up Review<sup>10</sup>. This Review picked a force structure option based almost exclusively on the requirement to fight two such wars. It identified other options that had smaller military force structures, based on the number and time spacing of the major regional conflicts that each could cover. This report said that the ability of its selected force to conduct OOTW was good.<sup>11</sup> The types of force reductions in its smaller options clearly demonstrated, however, that these options took proportional decreases in both warfighting and OOTW capabilities. This is not the best approach to shaping a smaller military force

to support the national strategy. The capability for OOTW should not be slighted to support forces for fighting wars that this capability might prevent.

The nation's future military must be shaped to support OOTW as a primary mission, and two new principles should determine the size and type of the force structure maintained for this mission. First, the structure must be large enough to sustain reasonably-likely levels of OOTW without crippling the initial-response force for a major war. Second, the structure must include those types and numbers of forces that economically deliver the mix of capability, speed, reach, and political agility appropriate to each OOTW mission. America does not need two separate military forces, one for war and the other for OOTW. Most of the types of forces needed for global OOTW will also be needed as part of the nation's warfighting force in a major regional conflict. The size of the active-component structure for each type of force, however, should be determined by integrating the requirements for rapid-response warfighting missions with the often larger day-to-day requirements for sustaining endurance in global OOTW.

#### Shaping for Endurance

Endurance is an expensive quality in OOTW. The recent major shift of U.S. forces out of permanent overseas bases means that endurance will increasingly depend on having a pool of active units

as a rotation base for temporary deployments. The smaller the pool compared to the deployment requirements, the longer each unit must stay away from its home base.

The military's people pay a high price through long and frequent deployments if the force is too small for its commitments. America's Navy learned this price in the late 1970's, when it experienced a sudden large surge in commitments for ship deployments to the Indian Ocean while its force structure was at a post-Vietnam low. The effect of the resulting long, closely-spaced deployments on the retention and quality of its all-volunteer force was catastrophic. Since then, the Navy has developed a clear and strict "PERSTEMPO" policy<sup>12</sup> that is accepted by Congress as a valid factor in planning peacetime force structure. The PERSTEMPO policy focuses on people by establishing the concept of a "personnel tempo of operations" limit on their time away from home. It guarantees people in deployable units that they will not be deployed (in peacetime) for periods longer than six months, and that their units will on average spend at least half their time at their home station despite deployments and inter-deployment training.

All services today are facing the dilemma of the 1970's Navy: steady or growing OOTW commitments for certain types of units, with a shrinking active-duty force structure of these same units as a rotation pool. There have been initiatives to use reserve-component forces to augment the rotation pool. This has a high cost in domestic political agility, so the services have generally limited usage to individual volunteers and to small units on their

annual training periods. No other service has yet articulated and enforced a formal policy with hard quantitative limits similar to the Navy's PERSTEMPO. Such a policy should be incorporated formally as a factor in planning all the services' force structure for OOTW. Without this approach, the unseen price of the endurance needed in OOTW will sooner rather than later be a decline in the retention of quality people. Such a decline would quietly hollow every capability of the nation's future military.

The size of the pool required to keep a single unit on a rotational forward-deployment commitment depends on three considerations:

-- PERSTEMPO limits

-- Time required for transit to and from the deployed location.

Units that move by surface require a larger pool than air-transportable units

-- Amount of time required between deployments. Units that must train for a warfighting mission different from their OOTW mission or perform extended maintenance require more time between deployments.

Based on these considerations, the support pool can range from just one active unit of a particular type to support a given unit deployment commitment, to as many as five or more. There is

tremendous leverage in knowing where the threat will develop and permanently basing units there, but this predictability has become uncommon since the end of the Cold War. Without such basing, any long-term deployment commitment can tie down a substantial force if the warfighting readiness of the units that rotate to support the commitment is to be maintained. This is an important factor to remember in matching future OOTW commitments to resources.

#### Shaping for the Missions

When the U.S. must fight a major war the nation's decisive capability is land combat forces, deployed through naval power. When the mission is OOTW, the decisive capability depends as much on the political situation as the military one. It is important that the U.S. have a broad array of military capabilities from which to shape the best response. Where a firm statement of U.S. commitment is required, deployment of land-based combat units is often the best answer if local access is available and time permits. "In foreign confrontations the United States is not committed until its land forces--its Army--is committed."<sup>13</sup> For missions requiring more agility or less power, special operations forces and land-based support units such as military police, logistics, medical, and engineers can be deployed alone. Finally, naval forces and strategic air forces can provide a more politically-agile and speedy capability than land-based combat

forces, but with more combat power than SOF.

The Army defined by the Bottom-Up Review is well-structured to deploy decisive power to war. This Army relies heavily on its reserve components to provide combat service and support forces, based on the assumption that these forces will be used only when combat units are deployed for a major war. The day-to-day missions of the Army today, however, are OOTW. Their demands are pushing people in the small number of some types of active-duty SOF and support units today to very high deployment activity levels ("PERSTEMPO"). This tempo will exact an inevitable long-term price in personnel retention and readiness. Army active-component SOF and support forces are already too small today in some areas to support current levels of OOTW over the long term. There is little room for absorbing more cuts or more deployments in these portions of the Army. The combat forces of the Army--and their supporting Air Force tactical fighters--are under proportionally less demand for OOTW. Even if cut by an amount that would reflect reduction to single-war capability, they would be more than adequate in size to also support OOTW tasking.

The missions of U.S. naval forces in peacetime are called "naval presence" by the Navy and Marines. These missions are in fact OOTW: deterrence, sanction enforcement, counterdrug operations, and immediate availability for raids, strikes, and other operations. The core elements of naval forces, ranging from aircraft carriers to amphibious groups with embarked Marines to Tomahawk-firing warships, can deliver both combat power and

endurance in nearly all those missions of OOTW which occur in the littoral areas of the world. Naval forces have been called upon for OOTW about twice as frequently since 1945 as land-based forces (air and ground)<sup>14</sup>; over 207 times through 1990.<sup>15</sup> This frequent employment has been as much because of the political agility and rapid in-theater availability of naval forces as their simple military capability. It is not cheap to maintain a naval force with the balance and size to sustain this kind of global flexibility; the Bottom-Up Review naval force is very close to a minimum. But cheapness is relative; the force for a given mission that is truly the most expensive is the one that does not have the flexibility or availability to be used when needed.

Naval forces that are continuously present in the littoral areas of a theater generally provide a stronger signal of deterrence than the less-visible threat from air or ground forces that are not deployed there. Beyond the littoral, or working with naval forces within it, long-range Air Force aircraft can also meet many of the surveillance and strike missions of OOTW. Both types of forces can usually be maneuvered to be as obtrusive or distant as the situation in a crisis demands. And neither is dependent for its success or endurance on reserve mobilization. Naval forces (Navy and Marine) need and use virtually the same support forces in peacetime operations as they would use in war, while the Air Force generally needs and uses only readily-available individual volunteer aviators from its reserve components.

Navy and Marine forces are heavily involved in OOTW today, as are certain types of Air Force surveillance and precision-strike aircraft. Army SOF and combat service support forces are also experiencing heavy demand for such operations. All these constitute the joint package of forces upon which America will continue to rely for the diverse military missions of global engagement. Further substantial cuts in such forces could leave their rotation base too small to maintain reasonable availability for OOTW in areas of vital U.S. interest. The requirements for OOTW deployments will become a principal factor determining their size if the U.S. military's warfighting requirement is reduced to a single conflict. If these forces are not large enough to meet the demands of OOTW without exhaustion, engagement will fail as a strategy because the military has failed as its tool.

Like the forces for warfighting, the forces for the future missions of OOTW will be shaped from every service. But the balance between the services, between the active and reserve components, and between the capabilities within each service will often be quite different from the balance for warfighting. As America's military becomes smaller, shaping it to maintain the balance for both of these vital missions will require a clear understanding and recognition of all the requirements it must meet.

## CONCLUSION

America has adopted a strategy of engagement that is both appropriate and essential to its long-term security. The process of shaping the smaller joint force to execute this strategy in the future must fully implement what former Secretary of Defense Aspin recognized:

"While deterring and defeating major regional aggression will be the most demanding requirement of the new defense strategy, our emphasis on engagement, prevention, and partnership means that, in this new era, U.S. military forces are more likely to be involved in operations short of declared or intense warfare."<sup>5</sup>

Today's military force structure, built primarily for warfighting, is being used heavily every day for OOTW. Such operations are the daily price of maintaining U.S. engagement and influence. Based on their inherent characteristics and on current experience, Army active-duty support forces, certain Air Force aircraft units, and many types of Navy, Marine, and SOF forces, provide the capabilities the U.S. needs and deploys most frequently to conduct OOTW. These forces must remain large enough in America's future military to sustain this critical type of support.

The nation's strategy of engagement rests on two co-equal military pillars: the capability to conduct diverse global operations other than war, and the capability to deploy to a single

major regional war and win. The military of the future must maintain a balance in both capabilities, while still sustaining modernization. A smaller U.S. military can be shaped which does this, if the reductions are focused on the forces supporting the lower-priority capability for a second major war. America's joint military must demonstrate that it is smart enough to recognize the strategic needs of the future and joint enough to protect the forces that best meet them.

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